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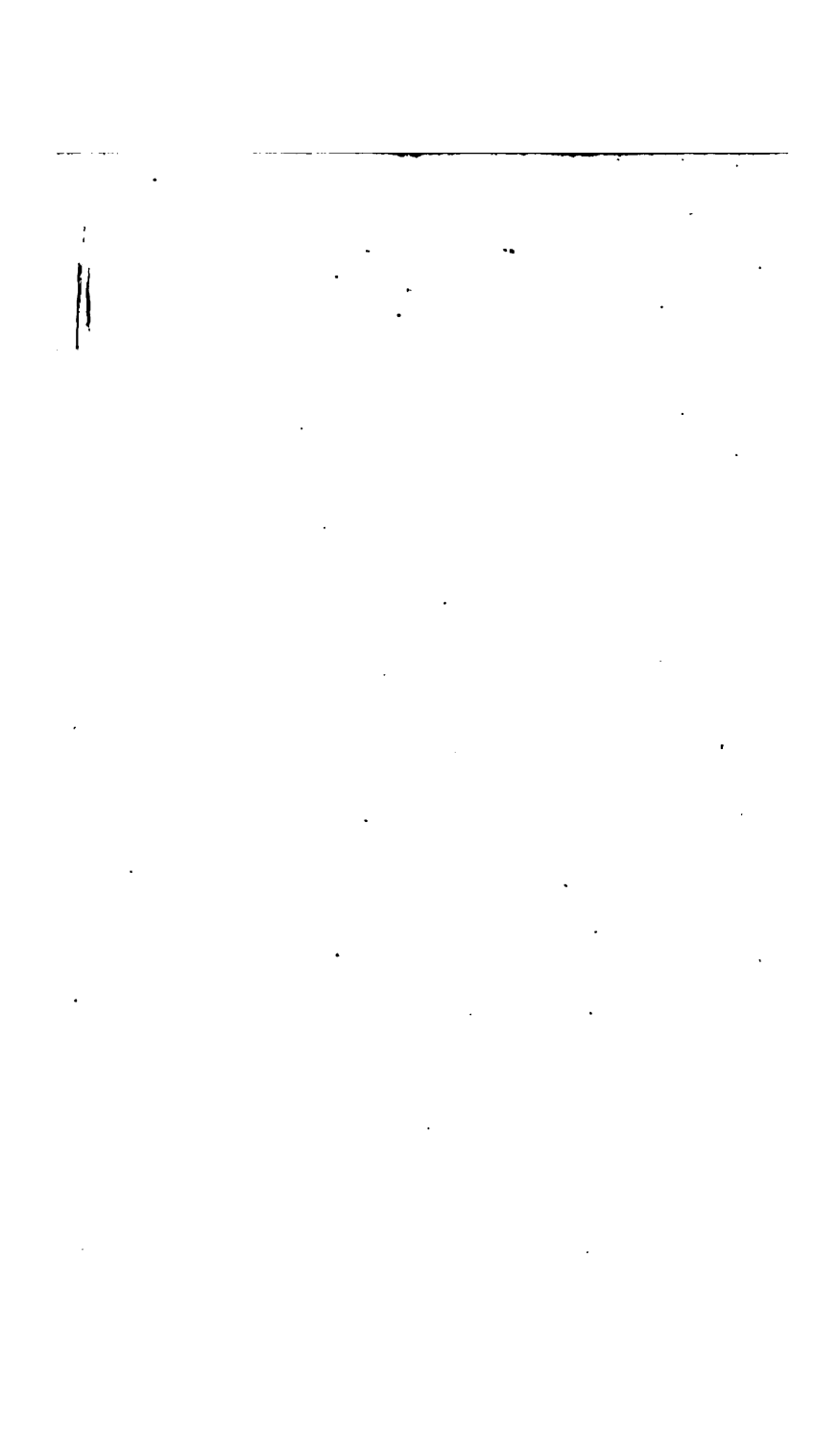
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Tales for the Young.

E V A;

OR,

AS THE CHILD, SO THE WOMAN.

BY

A. L. O'NEILL DAUNT.



London:  
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON;  
AND DERBY.  
1882.

1489. f. 148.





OR,

As the Child, so the Woman.



## CHAPTER I.

Not very many years ago there lived in a certain southern county of Ireland, a Catholic gentleman, whose name was Henry Allington. He, his wife, and three children occupied a comfortable house on their own estate, for Mr. Allington was landlord of a large property. He had not always been a Catholic, nor had he lived all his life in Ireland. When a young man, he had travelled a good deal abroad,

residing by turns at every large European town, and even making frequent journeys to parts scarcely ever visited at that time by Englishmen. At one period he lived for two entire years in the Bavarian Tyrol; and the impressions he derived from beholding the daily pious lives of the Catholic population, contributed in a great degree to turn him towards the Catholic religion.

Afterwards, at Rome, he entered the Church, and had the happiness of receiving his First Communion at the hands of the Pope himself.

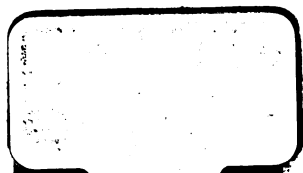
While still living abroad, he had become attached to, and married a pretty Irish girl, niece of a rich baronet, Sir Alan Fortescue. Not long after the wedding Sir Alan died, leaving all his property to Mrs. Allington, as he had no nearer relation. Thus it happened that Mr. Henry Allington became an Irish landlord, and he determined to live for the rest of his life on the property his wife had inherited.

Fernwood House stood in the midst of a garden of six acres, which was filled with a constant succession of beautiful flowers and plants. As the house was sheltered from the north and east by hills, the skill of the gardeners received every encouragement from nature; and both in winter and summer, something was always to be found in bloom. A balcony ran before the drawing room windows, from one corner of which a flight of quaintly carved stone steps led straight down among the flower-beds. On a deep broad stream, at the lower end of the garden, there were a great number of strange foreign water-fowl; and a favourite amusement of little Eveline Allington was to attract the fowls around her by throwing bread crumbs on the water.

Eveline was the only daughter. The eldest and youngest children were both sons; and Eveline, or Eva, as she was called, standing midway between them, was equally loved by both her brothers.



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come too, and Miss Murray and mamma. Do you remember the cup of cream and the griddle cakes you got last time we went there, you greedy old Hubert ?”

“I am not greedy, am I, mamma ? and I won’t go to see the—brats !” The last word he uttered in a low tone, for he saw that his mother was displeased.

“If you cannot agree, my dear children,” she said, “I shall ask Miss Murray to take you upstairs to Kate. And you, Eva, what were you saying to me a little while since ?”

Eva blushed and looked down ; then, jumping off her father’s knee, she ran to her brother, and kissed him, while he, in token of reconciliation, thrust a bit of his own apple into her mouth.

Shortly after they went to the drawing room, where Mrs. Allington took Eva on her lap, and Hubert sat at his father’s feet, listening to stories of his travels in the years gone by ; while Miss Murray sat in a curtained window recess, in the gather-

ing dusk, either working or musing. Then there was some music and singing before Mrs. Allington took her children to the oratory for their night prayers; and finally, the little flock being folded away in their warm beds, the parents and Gertrude Murray sat together until ten o'clock, when they too had night prayers, attended by all the servants, and before midnight all was at rest in Fernwood House.

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## CHAPTER II.

In a neat farm-house, about a mile from Fernwood, dwelt "Big Jack Martin," one of the most respectable tenants on Mr. Allington's property. Big Jack was industrious. Go when you might to his farm, you would be certain to find him occupied. He was also strictly sober. No one ever saw him in a public-house, and God bless-

ed his sobriety and industry with a peaceful, happy home, and good harvests.

He had married a neighbour's daughter, one Mary Foley, not for her fortune, though she had come dowered with the sum of two hundred pounds, but still more for her sweet face and good steady character.

The character of the soul within almost always shows itself on the outward expression. If a girl is sly and underhand, and given to lying or small acts of dishonesty, it will be visible on her face, her never looking straight in your eyes, her soft purring manner; so that, no matter how pretty she may be, one always finds a feeling of distrust in her company. A bold, forward girl is more easily discovered. She who does not regulate her thoughts will scarcely be able to give a modest look to her features.

But Mary Foley was a thoroughly good Catholic, striving daily to please God in all her actions; and so Jack Martin found a real treasure in his wife. He had three

sons, Michael, William, and Johnny ; and two daughters, the Mary and Bessie to whom Eveline had taken so strong a fancy.

On the day fixed for Mr. Allington's visit to the farm-house, Mrs. Martin was seated in the sunshine, knitting a stocking, when her little girls ran in from school. They looked quite heated and breathless as they came up to their mother.

"Mamma, the master is coming this evening, and Miss Eva, and Master Hubert, and maybe the mistress, and we'd want to have all swept within, and settled for 'em."

"So it is all swept," the mother said, smiling ; "when did ye see me with a dirty house? Run in, children, and get yer dinners, I'll bring ye the milk ; and then we'll thry and bake a couple of cakes on the griddle ; maybe Miss Eva and the young master would like to eat 'em after their walk."

And walking in as she spoke, followed by the children, she soon set their pota-

toes and milk on a clean cloth, and added a couple of fresh eggs to the meal.

While the children eat their dinner, Mrs. Martin got out her cream, flour, and butter. "Put the pan on the fire, Nelly," she said to the servant girl, who just then came in, "and rub it, though I think it's clean enough. We never should put a thing away dirty, and then we'll be spared the trouble of cleaning it when we want to use it. And when the cakes are baked run and tidy yerself."

The dinner over, Mary and Bessie went outside into their little garden, and, seated under a warm hedge, studied their tasks, so as to have more time to give to their visitors.

An hour had hardly passed when Mike and Johnny came running up. "The master is coming," they shouted. "Where are ye, ye pair?" they went on, looking round for their sisters, who, hearing Johnny's voice, made their appearance, feeling sure he had brought some news.

"Go in, boys, and brush yer heads," said Mrs. Martin; "yer coats are full up of mud, wherever ye've been."

Mrs. Martin by this time had her cakes baked; and they looked very appetising, piled up on a plate by the fire. She always looked neat and clean; but she had donned her best cap for the occasion, and came forward to receive Mr. and Mrs. Allington as they entered a moment later. She immediately opened a door on one side of the little passage, and asked them to step into the parlour. It was a small, but very clean room, with a bit of carpet in the middle of the floor, and some good strong furniture. There was a pretty blue paper on the walls, and a few pictures hanging round, representing our Lord, His Mother, and one or two other saints. There was in one corner a cupboard containing cups and saucers, and a number of books, for Jack Martin was fond of reading when the day's work was done, and as he took care of his books they were

always fit to be seen. Round the window, which was open, grew a fine pear tree; and owing to the fine weather the buds were in full blossom, and filled the room with fragrance.

"Oh, isn't it a pretty room, mamma?" exclaimed Eva. "And what a nice statue of our Lady you have, Mrs. Martin!" she continued, going to the end of the room, where, on a small table, stood a very well executed statue of the Blessed Virgin.

"It is a nice one indeed, Miss Eva. Bessie gained it for a prize at the convent, last examinations."

"Oh, I remember now," said Eva; "I was quite jealous of her, but papa gave me one for my room soon after. Where are Mary and Bessie?"

"They are peeping in at the door; then," said Mrs. Martin, laughing; "they are shy of the master and mistress."

On being thus discovered, Mary and Bessie came forward, blushing, to wel-

come their visitors, while Hubert, with his hands in his pockets, busied himself in examining a gun over the chimney-piece. Mary was a quiet, dark-haired child, very motherly in all her ways, and she had been a first-rate nurse for Johnny when he was a couple of years younger. Bessie was a fair-haired, blue-eyed fairy, fonder of running about with Johnny than of studying her lessons; but latterly she had tried to be good and steady, in the hope of making her First Communion with her sister.

Hubert and Eveline very soon after went out to see the calves and pigs, and the fine grey donkey that had given the little Martins many a ride. Hubert mounted him, and, attended by Mike and Johnny, set off round the field at a gallop, while Eva went to look at the little garden, with its bee-hives and its pretty flowers. In one bed there was balm, used in the manufacture of certain infusions or drinks in wintry weather; in another rue, thyme,

and mint; in a third, parsley and onions; in a fourth, wall-flowers and sweet-williams; while rose bushes had a bed to themselves, nearest the hedge, and furthest from the bee-hives.

"I'll ask mamma to give me seeds for you," said Eva; "we have so many flowers, we can spare you some; and I know there are some flowers suited for bees especially, such as mignonette."

Mary, who did most of the gardening, was much pleased, and they went on examining all their treasures one by one, and rejoicing in Eva's delight at all she saw. In the height of their enjoyment, an angry bee, darting out of the hive, stung Bessie in the neck. The child screamed, and ran out of the garden, followed by the two others. In the kitchen, to which they went, they found Nelly, the maid, looking very smart, with a clean apron and a scarlet bow at her throat. She took Bessie on her knee, and after finding the sting, rubbed salt

on the inflamed spot. Presently, she stopped crying, and Eva ran into the little parlour, where Jack Martin himself was now seated.

"Oh, mamma," were her first words, "poor Bessie got such a sting from a cross bee that flew out of the hive."

Mrs. Allington started up, but Mrs. Martin, saying she would soon make it all right, left the room.

Just then Hubert came back on the donkey, and declared he could keep riding about all night; "it was such fun." Scarcely had Hubert come into the parlour, than Mrs. Martin and Nelly brought in the "griddle" cakes, and a jug of rich milk, and asked the children to eat some of her baking.

"I assure you, Mrs. Martin," said Mrs. Allington, "they think very highly of your baking. It is only a day or two since they were praising some cakes they had on a former visit. But where are

your own little ones?—they must join in the feast.”

Hubert immediately ran into the passage, and caught hold of Mike and Johnny, who were lurking there; Eva followed to bring in Mary and Bessie, and then they all sat down and eat their cakes with a good appetite. Before many minutes had elapsed, not one remained on the plate.

“Mamma, dear,” said Eva, “they have such a nice little garden, and I want you so much to come out and see it.”

Mrs. Allington smiled, and rose to go with her daughter. Once in the garden, admiring its neatness, it was not difficult to gain a promise of flower-seeds and roots for her little friends; and Eva thanked her mother warmly.

The evening was now drawing to a close, and the visitors prepared to depart. Mr. and Mrs. Allington expressed their thanks for the reception they had met with; “and,” added the latter, “I hope Mrs. Martin will allow all her little ones, both

boys and girls, to come next Sunday, and see all the wonders my son and daughter will have to show them." So they went, leaving the children, at all events, quite delighted with the pleasant evening they had passed.

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### CHAPTER III.

The following Sunday, so eagerly looked forward to, came at last. After Mass and an early dinner, Hubert and Eva prepared to receive the little Martins, who did not delay long in arriving. They all went together to the stream to see the waterfowl, and amused themselves a long time with throwing bread crumbs into the water. Then Eva took Bessie and Mary to the poultry yard, while Hubert took Mike and Johnny to the stables and kennels. Eva had a bantam cock and hen of her own, of which she was very proud, and she

promised to give the Martins a few eggs for setting. Then they wandered about the garden and greenhouses, until Hubert came shouting to them to return to the house, as mamma had been calling for them. So they went in to find that, in the school room, a sort of afternoon lunch had been prepared, and Miss Murray presided in the absence of Mrs. Allington, who had something to do elsewhere; but she found time to come in before long, and spoke a few kind words to each of the Martins.

"Did you show them the oratory?" she asked Eva.

"No, mamma; but I'll take them there now, and Miss Murray will come too, and play a hymn for us; do, dear Miss Murray."

The governess smiled, and said she was quite at their disposal; so they left the school room, and, after crossing a long passage, and going down a flight of steps, they arrived at the oratory, which was

next the library. At the south side were two windows of stained glass, and a charming altar of white carved stone stood at the eastern extremity. Over the tabernacle, in a niche, was a white marble statue of our Lady, and a silver lamp hung from the ceiling. The altar was covered with flowers in vases, and rising up on each side of it were beautiful hot-house plants in great pots, all a mass of crimson flower. The children knelt down and said a few prayers, while Miss Murray took her seat at a harmonium near the door, and played one or two hymns, which pleased the little ones extremely.

"We haven't the Blessed Sacrament here," whispered Eva, "except when we have a priest in the house."

"When Johnny is a priest," answered Mary, very gravely, "he will say Mass for you."

"Is Johnny going to be a priest?" asked Hubert, in astonishment.

"Dada says he will school him for it," Mary replied.

Johnny looked a little sheepish at being made the subject of conversation ; but Miss Murray left them no time for further remarks, as she hurried them out of the oratory, saying they did wrong to be whispering there.

Returning to the school room, Miss Murray produced some of Eva's best picture books for the inspection of the little visitors, and this occupied them for another half hour, until Mary took an opportunity of whispering to her sister and brothers that it was time to go.

"Are you tired of us already?" the governess asked.

"Oh, no, miss," Mary said, blushing and hesitating ; "but mamma told us not to be too long, as it would maybe tire you out ; and when ye were so kind we would not like to be more free than welcome."

"You are a good child," said Miss Murray, "and you have not tired us at

all; but as it is almost time now for Vespers and Benediction at the convent, it might be just as well to break up our happy little party. Are you also going to the chapel?"

Mary said that she and Bessie would go, but the boys had better return home, as their services might be required in helping to drive home the cows. However, it was decided that Bessie and Johnny should go home, and Mike would escort Mary to the chapel. After bidding good-bye, and expressing their thanks to their entertainers, the Martins took their leave.

Hubert and Eva were quite tired with all the running about they had had, but they begged to be allowed to accompany the grown-up people to the chapel; so Kate dressed Eva, and they set off.

Vespers had already begun when they entered the chapel, and the nuns' voices sounded very sweet, and blended softly with the tones of the organ, as they sang the psalms. By the time Vespers were

over the evening had grown dark, and the chapel was lighted up by the profusion of candles on the altar. The odour of the flowers filled the air, and the atmosphere was rendered dim and sweet by the clouds of incense that rose from the thurible and circled round the sanctuary. The *O Salutaris* and *Tantum Ergo* were sung, and then all bowed their heads as the priest took in his hands the Adorable Host, and blessed the silent kneeling congregation.

Eva, with her face hidden in her hands, felt how sweet it was to be in the presence of God, and how highly blessed must the nuns be who lived in His very society, and had Him under their roof night and day in His real presence. She made many good resolutions, and laid them at the feet of Jesus; and then, as the choir intoned the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, she joined her own childish voice to the singing, and felt great happiness in the thought that the Mother of Jesus was her Mother also.

When the Allingtons left the chapel,

they found their carriage awaiting them, and they drove quickly home. After tea Hubert and Eva went to bed, while Miss Murray related to their parents, who were much amused, some of the sayings and doings of the children during the day, and great credit was accorded to Jack Martin and his wife for the way in which they had brought up their children.

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## CHAPTER IV.

A year passed away, and neither Eva nor the Martins had made their First Communion. How it happened was thus.

The day following that which the Martins had spent at Fernwood House Eva awoke with a headache and shivering in her limbs. During the day more decided feverish symptoms set in, and a doctor was sent for.

"The child," he said, "must have been

overheated, and then caught a chill; but the cold seemed to threaten the lungs, and the utmost care should be taken of her."

Of course, for many a day she could not leave the house, and when she did it was for a visit to Italy. Her parents were determined to give her every chance of becoming strong, and therefore decided on a change of climate.

Eva, however, had asked to see the little Martins. "I am so sorry I can't make my First Communion with you," she said; "but don't forget to pray for me."

"We are not going to make it, either," said Mary, sorrowfully.

"Why? what has prevented it?" asked Eva, opening her eyes wide.

"It was our own faults," said Mary, gravely.

And then Bessie spoke: "The day after the one we spent here we couldn't study, for thinking and talking of all we saw, and Sister Raphael complained of us to Mother Mary Agnes, and she said it showed

we thought very little of what was before us, and that she thought from the beginning we were too young and giddy, and so we are not to make it."

"Oh, I am so sorry," said Eva; "it was my fault for—" Here she paused a moment. "Perhaps it is all for the best," she continued, quoting words she had heard Miss Murray apply to her own case when conversing with her mother; "you will be better prepared next year, and I shall be strong again at home; and unless you are very anxious to make your First Communion soon, wait for me, will you?" This they promised, and Eva bade them good-bye, sending kind messages to their mother.

From Italy Eva sometimes wrote glowing accounts of her daily life. The weather was always so beautiful, hardly ever a cloud in the sky, and such numbers of churches and convents! Her parents went to visit the Holy House at Loretto, and of this Eva wrote: "Would you not think it

nice to see the very house in which our dear blessed Mother lived, and where Jesus lived, and St. Joseph ? You know angels brought it here through the air, that it might bless this land, and be more honoured. It is now in the middle of a splendid church which has been built round it, and you can't see the material of the walls on account of the lovely marble with which they are covered. I prayed for all of you, and that Johnny may become a good priest."

These letters were read with delight, and shown to the neighbours with great pride ; and all joined in wishing that the dear child might return completely restored to health.

One evening, in the May of the following year, Jack Martin, who had been absent most of the day at a fair, came home with the news that orders had been sent to the servants at Fernwood to air the rooms, and prepare them for the return of the owner and his family.

Mary and Bessie danced about the floor with joy, and quite forgot to ask their father for a "faireen," until he himself pulled a parcel of gingerbread cakes out of his pocket, desiring them to keep some for Mike and Johnny.

About the middle of May, when the hawthorn was in full bloom on the roadsides, and the woods glorious with a wealth of bluebells and the new foliage on the trees, the Allingtons arrived. Mary and Bessie, and a number of other little girls, awaited them at the gate with bunches of flowers in their hands, and Mary made a little speech which Jack Martin had prepared for her, saying how glad they all were to see Miss Eva come home in good health.

Then Eva, who had grown much taller, and whose face was embrowned by hot southern suns, leaned out of the carriage window, and shook hands with them all. Hubert put his head out beside her. "Where's Mike and Johnny?" he asked,

“and how is the old donkey? I’m going to have another ride on him; and mind you tell Mrs. Martin to bake some more cakes for me, for I have eaten nothing half so good since I left.” By which you see that Hubert had not grown shy during his travels.

“Isn’t it nice, mamma, to be home again among people that care for you?” said Eva; “and this place looks so lovely now, with the trees budding out.”

“It is very nice, my darling, to have you with us at home,” said Mrs. Allington, fondly. She had been afraid of losing her little daughter, and was ready to admire anything and everything, so long as she saw Eva looking strong again.

The catechism classes for the First Communicants were resumed at the convent the following week, and Eva took her place on the benches beside the little Martins. She had brought home a store of rosaries and medals blessed by the Pope,

as presents for her friends, and the nuns came in for a fair share of them.

Corpus Christi, falling that year in the middle of June, was fixed for the happy ceremony to which so many young hearts looked forward. A week before, Mother Mary Agnes made some observations to the children. "You know," she said, "that it is a custom with us to make you spend three days previous to First Communion in a strict retreat. Eveline Alington, can you explain what is meant by a retreat?"

"It is a withdrawing of ourselves from all outward cares or profane studies, to apply ourselves in perfect silence to prepare for the coming of our Lord into our hearts."

"Quite right. Now," Mother Agnes went on, "this retreat begins on Monday next, and all of you must be here for Mass at eight o'clock; I shall then give you your rule."

Accommodation had been provided for

Eva in the convent, as it was not thought prudent to expose her to the night air after her recent illness, and on the Sunday evening, after Benediction, Mrs. Allington brought her to the convent parlour. Mother Mary Agnes came to receive her, and after some moments spent in conversation, Mrs. Allington bade farewell to her daughter for the next few days.

Mother Agnes then conducted Eva to the schoolroom, where the boarders were at recreation. She was no stranger to them, as her daily lessons were learned there, so they gave her a warm welcome, and she enjoyed the rest of the evening in their company. At bed-time she accompanied them to the dormitory, and as this was her first visit to that part of the house she was much surprised at the appearance of the long room, with its three rows of little white-curtained beds. A few minutes were given for undressing, and then one of the girls said a short prayer aloud. The lights were extinguished, and very shortly

the quiet and regular breathing of the girls showed that they were asleep. Eva, too, fell asleep after a time, and it seemed as though not an hour had elapsed when a bell rang loudly, awakening all the children. On opening her eyes Eva saw it was daylight, and at the same moment a prayer was repeated aloud, and she heard the girls hurrying by to the dressing-room. A lay sister raised the curtain and looked in. "Rise now, Miss Eveline," she said, "there's only half an hour for dressing."

"Yes," said Eva; "but where shall I go to wash? and I don't know how to dress myself; Kate, our maid, always dresses me."

Sister Lucy bade her follow her, saying she would do everything for her. So Eva found herself in a room with basins all round on marble stands, at which girls were busily engaged at their ablutions, whilst others were brushing their hair before large looking-glasses. Sister Lucy brought Eva to a basin, and quickly washed

her face and neck ; then she brushed out her soft hair, and fastened it back with a comb. " Now wash your hands," said the nun, " and run back to your bed." Sister Lucy then helped Eva to dress, saying as she did so, " You ought to learn to dress yourself, Miss Eva ; many little girls here, smaller than you, can dress themselves well in ten minutes."

There were three or four young ladies in the convent who were to make their First Communion also, and Eva went with these to a little room set apart for them. It was furnished with benches and a table, while a little altar had been arranged at one end, with a crucifix and a statue of our Lady on it. Here they had morning prayers, after which they went to the chapel. The bell for Mass rang soon after, and Eva could see the little girls of the day school, who were to make their retreat, among whom were Mary and Bessie Martin, come into the chapel, guided by Mother Agnes.

After Mass and breakfast the children prepared for instructions. Sister Mary Raphael, who had presided over the meal, now gave way to Mother Mary Agnes, who entered the room holding in her hand a card, from which she proceeded to read the regulations of the retreat. The time was divided between prayer, needlework, meditation, preparation for confession, reading pious books, and play; but strict silence was to be observed throughout, not even in play time were they to speak of anything but God and pious things.

This explained, Mother Agnes went on to speak of the great purity of heart necessary for receiving Jesus Christ. If His Blessed Mother was required to be a virgin conceived without sin, what should be their care in making ready their hearts to receive Him, for the Blessed Virgin received no more than we do. It is the same God who came to her who comes to us. They were to cast out everything sinful by a general confession, a confession,

that is to say, of their whole lives from the time they first committed sin until that hour. Upon the manner in which they made their First Communion would depend perhaps the whole plan of their salvation.

Mother Agnes continued her instruction half an hour, and then the children were taken to the chapel for a few moments, to think seriously on what they had heard. On returning to their room some of them wrote down what the nun had been saying, while others read some good book, or the life of a saint. Then came needlework ; and then Mother Agnes came to help them to prepare for their general confession. At twelve they went to the chapel, and had their dinner afterwards. Then came play in the garden for an hour. The afternoon was passed in the same manner, and at seven o'clock, after night prayers, the children of the day school returned to their homes, while Eva, after an early supper, went to her bed in the convent.

The next day, Tuesday, was a repetition of Monday; but Father Carroll came in the afternoon to hear the confessions of such as were ready. On Wednesday they received absolution, and assisted at Benediction, a great privilege, as it was privately given for the nuns.

Mother Mary Agnes gave them a last instruction on the great love of God in giving Himself to them, and the ardent love they ought to have for Him in return. He who was born in a stable for them, He who died on a cross for them, was going to come in a few short hours into their hearts. The angels would be looking down on them from heaven, marvelling at the great love of Jesus, which made Him impatient for the moment to arrive which would see Him put in possession of their hearts.

"Your dresses are ready for you," the nun went on to say, "and your veils; but oh, my dear little children, do not let your minds wander for a moment upon what

you may chance to wear. Such thoughts are unworthy of a Christian at any time, but more especially when the King of heaven and earth is going to make His abode with you. Take care to be clothed with the grace of God, and as to the rest, if you are clean and neat it is no more than is due to the Majesty of God and the honour of His temple."

The day scholars were to come at seven the following morning, so that there might be time to put on their white dresses. All that night Eveline could scarcely sleep with thinking of the great happiness that awaited her on the following day. She fell asleep at last with her hands crossed on her bosom, and a joyful smile on her lips.

At half-past six next morning she was up. After a visit to the chapel and morning prayers, she went upstairs to dress. She and the young ladies who boarded in the convent, and who were her companions on this holy occasion, were dressed in

plain white muslin gowns, a long net veil on their heads, with a wreath of white lilies. They held long wax candles in their hands. In the meantime the other little girls were being dressed under the supervision of Mother Agnes in white frocks, white muslin veils, with a wreath of daisies, and they also carried in one hand a candle, and in the other their prayer books. Presently the Mass bell rang, and Mother Agnes lighted all the candles. The nuns went into the chapel, then the boarders, and lastly the First Communicants, two and two. Mary and Bessie looked at Eva, but she did not see them, so entirely were her thoughts absorbed in the great business of the hour. The chapel was beautifully decorated with flowers and lights, and the sweetest music was played in honour of the day. Mary Martin for one moment had an uneasy thought. "Suppose I am not really prepared. I may only think so, I am so ignorant; but oh, my God," she prayed,

looking up at the altar, "I do think I have done what lay in me to do, and I depend on Thee to do the rest." Bessie looked very sweet and devout; and as for Eva, the Mass to her seemed but a moment's length, so entirely was she wrapped up in prayer.

The great moment had now arrived. The First Communicants went up first to the altar, led by Eva and the other young ladies. They received their Divine Redeemer, and returned to their places, two by two. Before the last Gospel they went forward again. It was to renew their baptismal vows while the Blessed Sacrament was held over their heads. After thanksgiving, Mother Agnes brought them out to the room they had occupied during the last three days, where a very good breakfast was prepared for them. The Reverend Mother and some other nuns came in and presented them with pretty cards and pictures as memorials of the day. Mrs. Allington, who had been present with

her husband and Hubert, now entered, and clasped her little daughter in her arms. Then she spoke a few kind words to the other children present.

That day they all spent at the convent, and there Bessie had an opportunity of saying a few words to Eva. The latter had been for a few minutes to the chapel, and was returning to her companions, when Bessie met her.

"Is it not a happy day, Bessie?" said Eva, with a smile.

"It is, surely," the other replied. "The only thing troubling me is that it will so soon be ended. I'd like to stay here for ever."

"He will be ever in our hearts, Bessie, if we don't drive Him away by our own faults; and that will be heaven on earth. Yet it would be very nice to be always with Him, belonging to Him more than other people. Do you understand?"

Bessie looked as if she did not quite take in Eva's meaning, and the other went

on, with a slight blush and smile, "To be nuns, Bessie; do you see?"

"Oh, Miss Eva," said Bessie, earnestly, "it would be a grand thing; but maybe they wouldn't take me in; and then," she added, "it would be hard to leave mamma, and dada, and Johnny."

"Well, we are very young yet," Eva said; "and we had better go back to our companions than be talking here."

On their way they passed one of the altars, of which there were three in the garden, and which the nuns were arranging for the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, which was to take place in the evening. Some of the older girls were helping to adorn it with flowers.

"You happy little children," said Sister Mary Raphael, coming forward, "do you know that you will this evening have the privilege of walking close to the Blessed Sacrament, and of scattering flowers beneath our Lord's feet? Mary Talbot," she called out to one of the young ladies

at the altar, "bring one of the baskets of cut flowers here, while I explain this matter to the children."

When the basket arrived they saw that it had a scarlet loop or band for slipping over the shoulder, and that it was full of rose leaves and other flowers, pulled to bits. Sister Raphael, basket in hand, desired the children to follow her, and they speedily joined the rest of the First Communicants. "Now," she said, "four among you, each with such a basket as this slung over her shoulder, will walk before the Blessed Sacrament, and scatter the flowers in handfuls before it;" and she showed them how to do it. Two of the girls were chosen from among the boarders, and two from the day pupils, Eva and Bessie Martin being paired off in the latter list.

Five o'clock in the afternoon was the hour appointed for the commencement of the procession, and the chapel was crowded with worshippers, more or less devout.

First went a priest carrying a cross, accompanied by four acolytes with lighted tapers. Then went all the children of both schools, and the nuns, singing hymns and bearing lighted tapers. Then came the little First Communicants, immediately preceding the Blessed Sacrament, and the four chosen to scatter flowers. Acolytes followed, and the remainder of the congregation. They paused awhile at the first altar, and Benediction was given to the kneeling crowd by the celebrating priest. The Benediction was twice repeated at the two other altars, and again more solemnly in the chapel itself. At the end of all the Litany of our Lady was sung in alternate verses by the choir and by the Children of Mary.

At length all was over. The happy day, like every earthly joy, had come to an end; and when the congregation had departed, Mother Mary Agnes advanced towards the First Communicants, who still knelt in a row before the altar. "Now, my dear

children," she said, "Father Carroll is going to say a few words to you, and hear you consecrate yourselves to the Sacred Heart of that Lord whom you have received to-day." She then gave a card, with the Act of Consecration on it, to the first in the row, who was to pass it on to the rest. The priest appeared on the altar steps.

"You have already," he said, "renewed your baptismal vows, and I doubt not that you have given yourselves entirely to God. This day has come to an end. You were not able to prevent the sun from setting, the evening from closing in. It even appeared to fly more rapidly because it was so happy ; but if you remain faithful to the grace of this day, believe me, a day will come which will never see the night, an endless day in the everlasting possession of God in heaven. And now, little lambs whom Jesus loves, run into His arms stretched out for you, and promise to belong to Him alone faithfully for ever.

Could you endure to belong to the world or the devil again, after this day, in which you have tasted the sweetness of the love of God ? There is only bitterness in sinful pleasures. I tell you so, who am now an old man, and have seen many things in my time, and believe me, the only true pleasure consists in giving ourselves entirely to God, and in letting Him guide us as He will. Now make the consecration of your hearts to Him, and remember He is in the tabernacle, and hears what you say, and knows what you think."

Then the children in turn repeated the Act of Consecration, after which Mother Agnes removed the wreaths of flowers from their heads, and threw them at the foot of the altar, saying, "Our Lord will crown you with a wreath which will never fade, if you are faithful."

So the day ended, a day which would remain fixed in their memories for ever.

## CHAPTER V.

A great many years rolled by, bringing changes to all our young friends. Mary Martin was Martin no longer, but Mrs. Hurley, with a neat, happy home of her own, and a fine little boy called Jack, after his grandfather. That grandfather was laid beneath the sod in Kilcrennan churchyard. He had met with an accident that resulted in a lingering illness, which, although he was not an old man, had carried him off at last. Johnny was high up in college, expecting his ordination very shortly, and Bessie was still with her mother, whose great joy and comfort she was. She had become very clever with her needle, and often spent a day at Fernwood House, working for Miss Eva, who was now a tall, handsome girl, home from France, where her education had been

conducted for some years past. She would have liked Bessie to be always with her, and she hoped to arrange it so after William's marriage at the ensuing Shrovetide should have given Mrs. Martin a new daughter.

Eva was not altogether so strong as Mrs. Allington had hoped and expected she would be, but as she was always cheerful and never complained, the mother generally put aside all fear.

There was much company now at the "big house," and many visitors came and went. Among these was a Mr. Lowell, who was an especial favourite with Mr. and Mrs. Allington.

"Mamma," said Bessie, one evening to her mother, after a long silence, in which one had been knitting and the other making a shirt for William; "Mamma, I am sure that Mr. Lowell is in love with Miss Eva. I met them riding to-day. Master Alan was with them on his pony, and it would make you laugh to see the way Mr.

Lowell kept beside her, talking, and you'd think he'd never look enough at her."

"That may be," replied Mrs. Martin, "but any one would be in love with Miss Eva, she has such a sweet, kind face, and it isn't for us to mention one above another."

"But I was in her room the other evening, mamma, when her maid was settling her for the dinner, and as she looked pale, Jane put some scarlet poppies in her hair and the bosom of her dress. 'Mr. Lowell will be delighted with you to-night, miss,' says Jane; and Miss Eva got as red as the poppies themselves, and looked down in a way she has when she's thinking greatly of anything."

"Well, well, time will tell," said Mrs. Martin, wisely.

Bessie stitched on, but her thoughts flew back to the day, now so long ago, of the First Communion, and she remembered Eva's words about wishing to be a nun. "I wonder what she'll do," thought

Bessie. "People change greatly in the course of years; but anything she'll do will surely be right."

A few months passed. One day Bessie met Eva and Mr. Lowell coming up the road in the direction of the farm-house. "I am bringing Mr. Lowell to see you, Bessie," Eva said, shaking hands; "he has heard so much from me concerning our early days that he was quite anxious to make your acquaintance." And she glanced at her companion in a sweet half shy way.

"It is fortunate we met you here," Mr. Lowell said, "as you seem bent on taking a stroll."

"Oh, I'm not going anywhere, sir," answered Bessie. "My mother is within, if you please to come to the house."

In a few minutes they were seated in Mrs. Martin's little parlour, talking over old times and memories.

"How we used to enjoy the cakes you gave us," Eva exclaimed, laughing.

"And so did Mr. Hubert," said Mrs. Martin. "Is it true he is going to leave the country?"

"Yes," Eva said, with a sigh, "he is going to India very shortly, and we shall not see him again for many a year."

"The Lord carry him safe!" uttered Mrs. Martin, piously. "And now, Miss Eva, if I may be excused for asking the question, is it true that you are thinking of leaving the old home?"

Eva blushed to the very tips of her fingers, and looked across to Mr. Lowell, who answered for her, "I hope it is true, Mrs. Martin. One reason for our visit this evening was to tell you, by her own desire, that Miss Allington is to be my wife before very long."

"You're a lucky gentleman," said Mrs. Martin; "a man never got a sweeter, more religious lady for a wife than you're getting, and I know her since she was born. God bless you, Miss Eva, dear,"

she went on, catching Eva's hands, and kissing them.

Eva could not tell why it should be, but her eyes filled with tears, and she threw her arms round the kind woman's neck, and kissed her. Then she saw Bessie making off hastily from the room, and she followed her into the little garden. "What, Bessie, crying are you?" asked Eva. "Are you not glad?"

"I'm glad and I'm sorry, Miss Eva," Bessie said, sobbing; "but life won't stand still for us, and I'm lonesome thinking of the old days, and that you'll shortly be going far away from us."

"But I hope your mother will let you come with me, Bessie. We shall travel a good deal at first, and you will be delighted with all the countries you'll visit."

Bessie shook her head. "It is very kind of you, Miss Eva; but—but do you remember the day of our First Communion? You asked me would I like to be a nun."

"Oh, yes," was all Eva could say, as

she stood looking at her companion, and feeling a great pang in her heart at her words.

"And so all these years," continued Bessie, "I've thought of your words, and of the day and the time you said them, and how you looked, and of the garden full of flowers, and the altars, and the procession, and it has grown into my mind that I'd live and die where I was so happy that one day."

Bessie had spoken eagerly, but she wished she had kept her tongue to herself, when she saw Eva's face: it had an expression of pain and terror on it.

"Sure you aren't vexed with me," said Bessie, humbly; "it isn't that I don't want to go with you, but——"

"But that the Lord has called you to follow Him, and you have obeyed His voice," said Eva, slowly. "Yes, Bessie, you are very right and very happy. I seemed to see things plainly while you spoke. Pray for me, Bessie, often,—often

when you kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. You will not forget? And tell Mary, also; I should like to see her before I go away."

She kissed Bessie's forehead, and was preparing to leave the garden, when Mr. Lowell and Mrs. Martin joined them from the house. Bessie made her escape, but Eva tried to appear cheerful, and entertained Mr. Lowell with a history of each flower bed, and how the bees had stung Bessie once, and were very near stinging her another day; upon which, Mr. Lowell suggested a retreat from the neighbourhood of the bee-hives, and that, as it was growing late, they would wish Mrs. Martin good evening. By the time they had reached Fernwood House Eva was looking up into her companion's eyes with the sweet trusting smile that gave her face its principal charm for him.

The wedding was fixed for the middle of November, and Mrs. Allington had ordered her daughter's trousseau. Many

articles, however, were prepared at home, and Bessie was almost constantly at the "big house" sewing with Eva's maid.

The moon had risen one evening before Bessie returned home.

"What kept you so late?" she was asked by her mother.

"I went to the convent chapel, mamma, after finishing Miss Eva's work. There was Benediction this evening, and I had a talk with Mother Agnes after. The wedding clothes came to-night, and Miss Eva was showing me some of them."

"I suppose they are very grand?" said Mrs. Martin.

"They are, indeed. Her wedding dress is white satin, covered with splendid lace, and a veil,—oh, you couldn't think human fingers made it. And then her travelling dress is dark blue velvet, and a hat to match. I couldn't tell you half the things she's got, and the presents from her friends. Surely, it's a wonder if she isn't happy, if

clothes make happiness, and jewels and gold."

"You're a queer little girl," said Mrs. Martin, turning quickly to look at Bessie. "Is it sighing for grandeur you are?"

"Oh, not I, mamma; I'd rather be as I was on the day of my First Communion, than stand in her shoes now."

"You might stand in worse shoes," returned her mother. "But what makes you be sighing that way?"

"It will never be the same life again," said Bessie; saying which she surprised herself and her mother by bursting into a fit of crying. "I don't know what ails me at all," she sobbed; "I'm a great fool, but it's in my mind, somehow, that she won't be happy."

"You'd better go to bed, child," said Mrs. Martin, soothingly. "You're not well; see, your cheeks are burning. I'll bring you a cup of tea in bed."

So Bessie hurried away to her bed, and

after repeating her night prayers, and drinking her tea, became calm again.

The eve of the wedding day came at last. Mr. Lowell was to come down that night, and sleep at the parish priest's house. The dining-room at Fernwood had been decorated with hothouse flowers, and the tables prepared for the breakfast which was to follow their return from Mass. Mrs. Allington was very busy, very anxious, and half glad, half sad, at the prospect of parting with her only daughter. Alan, of all the household, was the only one who looked forward with unmixed pleasure to the events of the following day.

Eva sat in her room with a few of her intimate friends, young girls who were to act as bridesmaids. There was much quiet fun among them, and joking, which sometimes brought a smile to Eva's face; but she was very grave that day on the whole.

Night came. Alan and Hubert went down to the railway station to meet Mr. Lowell, "and to see how he conducted

himself," as they said laughingly to Eva on quitting the house.

A couple of hours passed. Mrs. Allington had been called out of the drawing-room, and her husband was in his study. Eva every moment expected to see Mr. Lowell enter the room, and she was continually glancing towards the door, and starting at every sound. Suddenly there was the sound of wheels at the hall door. Eva started, while her friends smiled at her emotion. After awaiting in vain for a few minutes the appearance of Mr. Lowell, she began to think the carriage could not have been that which conveyed him, or that some pressing business with her father detained him below. Half an hour passed before Mrs. Allington came into the room. She looked pale and rather nervous, as she called Eva away with her, apologising to the rest for depriving them of her company.

"Has he come, mamma?" Eva asked, as they left the room.

"No, dear child. Your father wants you in the study."

"Oh, about the settlements," Eva said.

Her mother made no reply.

At the study door they met Hubert and Alan coming out, each of whom in turn kissed their sister in silence.

"Did you not find James?" she asked.

But her brothers had gone, and she saw her father walking up and down the room with slow and thoughtful steps.

"Poor little girl!" he said, drawing her towards him as he sat down. "My poor Eva, it is so hard to tell you!" Eva looked up with a frightened expression, and at the same moment her mother came behind, and put her arms round her. "Your brothers went to the station; but as James did not come they telegraphed to the place he has been staying at the last few days, and received for answer that he had left in the morning to come here. Then the truth came out later that an accident had happened on one of the northern lines,

the one he was travelling on, and that some passengers had been injured. Hubert sent off a telegram to the station master there, asking if Mr. James Lowell was among the injured, and the answer received was, that he was very seriously injured, and his life was in danger."

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" sobbed Eva, whose face was hidden on her mother's shoulder; "oh, mamma, darling, take me to him; let us go to-night—at once! If he dies I shall never forgive myself for not being with him."

"Patience, my poor child," whispered Mrs. Allington; "no train leaves before six in the morning, and we cannot start sooner; but we shall certainly take you to see him."

"The excitement may be too much," said Mr. Allington, looking doubtfully at Eva, whose whole frame was convulsed with sobs and tears.

"I think not," his wife rejoined, gently stroking her daughter's hair as when she

was a little child. "Eva will have strength given her to bear with the worst. You will seek it, darling, where alone it can be found."

Eva kissed her mother passionately. "You dear, kind mamma," she said, "let us go to the oratory and pray for him. Oh, God is so good, He will surely hear my prayer," she said to herself, as she went towards the oratory, where the candles were already lighted on the altar for night prayers. Mrs. Allington followed, to find Eva prostrate on her very face before the altar. Presently the sobbing ceased, and Eva rose at length with the calm exterior of one who has made a resolution. The tears started to her eyes again on seeing the floral decorations her friends had made for the wedding. Garlands of ivy and roses festooned the walls, and beautiful hothouse flowers, some of which had been sent from the convent, adorned the altar. But she repressed her tears, and walked on steadily to the drawing room.

Her friends were engaged in listening to Hubert's account of the accident, so far as it was known, and in speculations as to how Eva would bear the shock, when she herself appeared among them. They hushed their voices as she entered; but they were surprised at her apparent calmness.

Hubert watched her in silence for some minutes, and then whispered to his mother: "Did you tell her it was a mortal injury; that he cannot recover?"

"No, no," she said, "I dare not; she must see for herself later on."

"Then you mean to go?"

"Yes, by the six o'clock train. Now," continued Mrs. Allington, aloud, "as we have an early journey before us, I think we shall have night prayers at once. Will you come, Eva, darling, or had you not better go to your room?"

"Yes, I shall go to my room," Eva said, in a low but steady voice. "Pray for me,—for us,—all of you." She broke off

there, as if afraid to trust herself, and bidding her mother and friends good-night, left the room.

In her own room Eva found her bridal dress arranged for the following morning, and she sank on her knees with her face pressed against the satin folds. "Oh, my God, it seemed so happy a few hours ago, and now all is changed for ever!—for ever!" she repeated, stroking the satin and lace in an absent sort of way, as though looking far beyond. "I shall never wear you," she continued, pressing her lips to the dress for a moment; "you were the emblem of much happiness to me a little while since, but that is gone now. It is all for the best. Oh yes, God sends all for the best; but I wish the stroke had fallen on me, and spared him. What did he ever do to deserve such a fate? Jane," she said to the girl who entered the room at that instant, "take those things out of my sight."

"We'll keep them safely, Miss Eva, till

you come back with your young gentleman in good health, please God," said Jane, wishing to console her young mistress.

Eva said nothing for a minute.

"Jane, please pack a few things for me. I am going at six o'clock. Anything black; I shall wear nothing but black for the future."

"I will, Miss Eva; but do get to your bed now, for you look almost ready to faint; you are as white as a ghost. Shall I get you a glass of wine, or a cup of tea, or anything?"

"Nothing, Jane, thank you; I am quite well. I shall try to sleep. It must be so for a time," she said, wearily. And Jane, who did not understand, feared her young lady's brains were giving way.

Mrs. Allington came in to see that Eva was comfortable, and after she had said good-night, and gone, a knock was heard, and Alan looked in.

"Poor dear little sister," he said, bending over her. "I am so awfully sorry for

you and Jem. I wish to the Lord I could do anything to relieve him or you. There's that great Hubert gone to his room crying; and he couldn't bear to face you, he's so sorry, though you'd think he didn't feel much."

"Thank you, Alan, darling. I know you both would do anything you could for me; but there's nothing to be done now but to pray and to be patient. Give my love to Hubert, and go and sleep, dear."

Alan hugged his sister as she spoke, and hurried away.

Less than twenty-four hours from that moment, Eva and her parents were with James Lowell. He had been carried to an inn in the nearest village to the scene of the accident, and an examination of his injuries sufficed to show the doctor that he had not long to live. He was tossing restlessly on his bed of pain when Mr. Allington was announced.

"Where is she?" whispered the sick

man, whose eyes shone with the brilliancy of fever.

"She is here in the next room," replied Mr. Allington; "and my wife has come to nurse you, too, Jem, so you must recover between two such sisters of charity."

"No, I have only a few hours to live," James Lowell said; "but—oh, my chest is killing me!" He paused a moment, struggling for breath. "I would wish to see her," he resumed.

Eva was summoned by her father, and Mrs. Allington accompanied her.

"How good, how kind," whispered poor Lowell, as Eva threw herself on her knees at his bedside. "You will not leave me again, darling; it is only for a short time, a few hours."

"Oh, Jem," cried Eva, "do not say so! I have prayed for you so earnestly; I have even promised God," and here she lowered her voice so that none but he could hear, "to become a nun, to give up my life to

His service wholly if He will but spare you."

"And would life be worth living then?" said James Lowell, earnestly. "But don't deceive yourself, I shall be gone shortly. I had something to give you. Open that dressing case, Eva, and bring me a white parcel." He sank down exhausted, while Eva, with trembling fingers, tried to do his bidding. "Now," he said, opening the packet, "these were diamond ornaments for you,—my family diamonds,—my bridal gift; and here is the wedding ring. Little Eva, wear it for my sake. You will never find any one to love you as I would have done."

Although Eva was blinded by her tears, and stricken dumb by his loving words, it seemed to her that another voice spoke in her heart: "No one has loved you as I have done. I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have died for you on a cross."

"James," she said, suddenly, "have you seen a priest?"

"One was here last night, and he promised to come again to-day."

"I shall send for him," she said, starting up. "Papa, please tell some one to go for a priest."

"Do not leave me, Eva," implored her lover. And she again knelt beside him, and soothed him with sweet words until the priest arrived. Then they all withdrew until they were summoned to attend the giving of the Viaticum.

The night wore away, Mr. and Mrs. Allington taking it in turn to watch until about four in the morning, when the last change set in. Eva was called from her room, and took her place close to him who was to have been her husband. He smiled as she bent down and kissed his forehead, and then he fell into his agony, Eva bravely holding his hand and praying unceasingly. At six he died, and as his head fell back on the pillow Eva prayed

in her heart: "Dear Lord, I too have done with this world. Accept me as Thine, and Thine only, for time and for eternity."

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## CHAPTER VI.

A fortnight elapsed. The body of James Lowell had been consigned to its last long rest in his family tomb, and Mr. and Mrs. Allington had returned home with their daughter. Never very strong, the excitement and sorrow had proved too much for Eva. She had caught cold, too, in her journey northward and the subsequent watching by her lover's dying bed, and although she struggled for some days against the sickness which she felt was impending, she was overcome by it in the end, and lay upon her bed ill of a nervous fever.

Bessie had come to see her, and remained to nurse at Eva's own earnest re-

quest, and her presence seemed to soothe the sufferer even in her worst paroxysms. Kind and constant care had its reward. Eveline Allington rose from her bed at length, restored, if not to perfect health, at least to life and to her daily duties.

Before she left her room, however, Hubert had gone on his voyage to India, and Alan had returned to college. Mr. Allington determined upon taking his daughter abroad, and Eva consented to go on condition that Bessie accompanied them in their travels. So it was arranged, with the ready permission of Eva's father and Bessie's mother, and Fernwood House was once more deserted by its owner, and left in charge of one or two old servants.

Mrs. Martin received many letters from her daughter describing all the places they visited. Paris, with its splendid buildings and glittering shops, its broad river spanned by handsome bridges, its magnificent churches, its busy, cheerful,

teeming population, was first on the list. Thence to Rouen, around which clustered many historical memories. There the great tower of the cathedral fascinated Bessie's attention, on account of its structure and its height. Thence to Bayeux, where they examined the celebrated tapestry, wrought by fingers now for so many ages reduced to dust. Then back again to Paris, of which Bessie was never tired. They went on, after the lapse of a few weeks, to Poitiers and to Paray-le-Monial, where, in the convent chapel of the Visitation, Jesus Christ Himself had appeared to His faithful servant, Marie Marguerite Alacoque, and shewn her His Heart, which He complained had so loved men, and been so little loved in return.

"It made me feel," Bessie wrote, "more than ever, that all we can do is too little for Him who died for us; and it made me firmer in my notions of becoming a nun. I, at least, will give myself up entirely to Him."

She might have added that Eva went often to pray in the chapel of the Apparition, and renewed her resolution of forsaking home and parents, and all the comforts of life, for the convent, and the nun's black robe and veil. She never mentioned James Lowell now. She had given him into the hands of God, and wished to forget him totally.

They visited Venice, that city built on the sea, whose streets are canals, and its vehicles boats, but they remained only a few days there. From thence they went to Rome. Eva wished to get the Pope's blessing once more. She saw him in private audience, and begged his blessing on her resolution to become a nun, and on her future life. The kind old man looked at her delicate face, and thought within himself that her career in this world would most probably be a short one. "The longest life, when viewed from eternity, is very short, my child," he said; "and what are a few days in comparison

with endless ages spent in the bosom of God? The sufferings of this life should be nothing to the soul that believes, hopes and loves. I give my blessing readily to your resolution, and I bless you and yours in all the actions of your life, and above all in the hour of your death. Pray for the poor old Pope, my daughter, that he may have grace to persevere; and if you happen to go before me to heaven," he said, with a smile, "you will leave the door slightly ajar for me."

Eveline was greatly refreshed and comforted by this interview, and Bessie had also the consolation of seeing the Holy Father.

"We all waited for him in a splendid hall," she wrote home to her mother, "a great number of priests, and ladies, and gentlemen, from every nation under the sun, I think; and when he came in from another room, dressed in his white garments, we all fell on our knees before him, he looked so holy and so grand. He

said something to everyone, and when he came to Miss Eva he said he had seen her before; and then she told him who I was, and he laid his hand on my head and blessed me, and I nearly choked trying to tell him how we all loved him in Ireland, and Miss Eva told him in Italian all I said, and he laughed, and said he loved Ireland dearly, that was always so faithful to him and the Catholic faith, and he blessed me again, and sent his blessing to you, mother dear, and to all at home. And now I've got all I care for in this life."

After this the Allingtons went to Naples, and remained there a month or two, as the sea breezes seemed to do Eva a great amount of good. Early in the autumn they returned home. Alan met them at the railway station, and although he congratulated his sister on her healthy appearance, he could not help saying to Bessie Martin, "What were you all about,

that you did no better for Miss Eva than that? She looks very ill, I think."

"Oh, that's the journey, Mr. Alan," Bessie said, encouragingly; "she's tired, but she'll be all right in a day or two." But in her inmost heart she feared that Eva's days were numbered.

The following Sunday evening, Miss Allington and Bessie met at the convent gate as the Benediction bell was ringing. "Pray will you tell Mother Mary Agnes that we should be glad to see her for a few moments after Benediction?" Eva said to the portress as she passed in. "Oh Bessie," she sighed, "when will the day come that will see us settled here never again to leave?"

"Soon, then, I hope, Miss Eva," Bessie answered, laughing. "It's like heaven on earth, so it is, to be here, and we'll only leave it for heaven itself some fine day."

They entered the chapel as she spoke, which seemed as unchanged in its decorations and appearance as though they had

only seen it the day before. Vespers were chanted, and the Benediction followed. It was only too quickly at an end, and Eva and Bessie found themselves standing outside the chapel door when all was over. A nun made her way towards them.

"Welcome home once more, my dear Eva," she said, kissing her; "and you, too, Bessie. What a little traveller you are! Come into the parlour; Sister Elizabeth said you wished to see me. And now," Mother Agnes said, when they were all seated, "I should begin by asking you the news from abroad, but it is too late now, and Eva should not be out in the night air; though you're not looking so badly, dear, altogether. You had, perhaps, better tell me your business at once."

"It is told in a few words, mother dear," Eva replied, sinking on her knees at the nun's side. "Here you have two worldlings seeking for admission into your community. Are you afraid to undertake the care of us?"

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"My darling child," Mother Agnes began, and then she paused. "Are you certain of this?" she resumed; "and have you consulted your parents?"

"Oh, yes. Mamma gave me leave to speak last night. Poor mamma! it cost her a great struggle. And Bessie's mother is only too glad to get rid of her; isn't she, Bessie?"

Bessie smiled. "She has others to look after her now, besides me," she said.

"You may well ask," Eva continued, "if I am certain of this. Oh, yes, I am. I knew it all along, but I would not listen to God, and so He punished me. I have nothing more to do with this world, believe me."

She spoke so earnestly that the nun was convinced of her sincerity. "Well, I shall speak to Reverend Mother, and you can come again on Thursday. I need say nothing to Bessie. The little witch let me know her intentions long ago. You were faithful to the grace of your First

Communion, dear," she added, smiling.  
"Thank God for it."

"And I was not," Eva said, humbly.  
"How good of Him to have had patience with me."

"Well, you love Him now, and will love Him for ever, so don't cry nor think of the past. Look onward. And now you had better go home, Eva. Is any one with you, Bessie?"

"She drives home in the carriage with me," Eva said. I am a very lazy, good-for-nothing person not to walk all the way; but so it is commanded."

"Good night, then, my children, and let me see you on Thursday next."

Mother Agnes kissed them as she spoke, and the two girls went out in the dusk to where the carriage awaited them.

"One step gained," Eva said, with a quiet, happy smile; "a little more, and our hearts will be at rest."

On the following Thursday, as arranged, Eva and Bessie again went to the con-

vent, where they saw the superioress, and despatched a little necessary business. Eva said her father would call on the following day, to settle matters concerning her dowry. It was finally made certain that in a fortnight from that day they would both be admitted as postulants.

The intervening days passed quickly, and the happy moment arrived which beheld the convent gates close upon our heroines for evermore. The same evening they were introduced to the community by the Reverend Mother, and received the "cap," the symbol of their apprenticeship to the religious life. After this, half an hour was passed in listening to the reading of a book treating of the duties of a religious, and the means at her disposal for sanctifying those duties. Then each sister departed in silence to different occupations, some to the school, and others to employments about the house. As each one had her own work marked out for her there was no confusion. Bessie was given in

charge to Sister Monica, the oldest of the lay sisters, while Eva accompanied the superioress to her room. By-and-by she was conducted to the noviciate, and confided to the care of her dear friend, Mother Agnes, who was then novice-mistress. It was a very pretty room, perfectly plain, but with a certain air of refinement, perhaps arising in a great measure from its excessive cleanliness. There was not a speck of dust visible anywhere, and a delightful perfume rose from the flowers, which even at that season mustered in graceful array on an altar of our Lady at one end of the room. No time was lost in examining Eva in various branches of knowledge, so as to judge of her qualifications for teaching in the school. She gave much satisfaction by her replies, and it was decided to give her the charge of a class in the young ladies school to begin with.

That night, as Eva knelt in the chapel at meditation, she thanked God again and

again for having conducted her so safely to the haven of a religious life. She shuddered at the recollection of how very near she had been to losing all chance of it, and she recognized in the death of James Lowell one of God's greatest mercies to her.

At recreation, after supper in the community room, Bessie, who was also there, approached Eva shyly. The latter made room for her to sit beside her, and asked what she had been doing all day.

"I was one while helping to wash dishes," said Bessie, "and another while mending old table-cloths, and then I went to the young ladies' dormitory to prepare it for the night."

"In fact, you have had your hand in everything by turns," said Mother Agnes, who was listening. "Sister Monica must report what you are good for, so that you may be set to it."

Sister Monica, on being appealed to, said that she found Bessie neat and careful

about everything she undertook, but that she seemed to be especially handy at needlework.

"There is plenty of work here to keep you always employed," said Mother Agnes, laughing, "but Reverend Mother must decide. In the meantime, the humblest occupations should be the most eagerly sought after by the true nun. They derive an almost infinite value from the intention with which they are performed, so that, if we will, we may have our hands ever full of beautiful jewels to offer to our Divine Spouse."

Bessie's heart bounded with delight at these last words. "Our Divine Spouse!" she thought. "Oh, what a dignity for me to be raised to! Poor as I am, I have a higher rank than all the kings of the earth."

The following day, as the nuns walked in their garden after dinner, Bessie, who was with the lay sisters, smiled as she saw Eva passing near. "Sister Monica, I

think she is the prettiest lady there," she observed to her companion, the old lay sister.

"You must take care not to say such things," replied Sister Monica; "here we must look on all alike, and give no preference in word or thought to one above another. You must forget that Miss Eveline Allington and you were so much together once, and love her just simply according to the commandment."

"That will be the hardest part of my endeavours then," Bessie said; and her voice had a sorrowful tone in it.

"Ah, Bessie Martin," continued Sister Monica, shaking her head, "I remember a sweet young creature here many years ago, when I was young myself. She took a great liking to one of the nuns above the rest, and when Reverend Mother warned her of it, she would by no means allow she was in the wrong, she even defended herself. In the end she grew tired of the life here, and returned to the world. I heard

after that she was married to some one who deserted her, and in her anger and despair she took poison, and so her life ended. See from what a small beginning the evil came."

"You are right, sister," said Bessie, frankly; "one never knows how things may end. I will take care, as I should not like to leave this."

On the Sunday after their entrance into the convent, Mr. and Mrs. Allington came to see Eva, and Bessie's mother and brother called upon her. They found the young postulants well contented with their lot, but the parting was painful when Benediction hour came.

Eva's heart smote her on observing her mother's tears and her father's sad face; and although she managed to preserve a calm exterior in the presence of her parents, she broke down in the chapel; but as her tears fell at the feet of Jesus they were sweetened by His grace, and she felt quite happy again when, on the

conclusion of Benediction, she returned with the other sisters to the noviciate.

Bessie had also passed through the same trial, and had met it in the same spirit. And in the faithful discharge of their daily duties the next few months sped rapidly, and brought the time near for their reception of the habit.

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## CHAPTER VII.

The festival of the Annunciation had arrived, and the convent chapel was decked in its brightest garb, for, besides the celebration of a great feast day, the two postulants, Eveline Allington and Bessie Martin, were to receive the white veil. The chapel was thronged almost to suffocation with friends of both the candidates, and when the bell for Mass brought with its sound nuns and children in long file, two and two, all eyes were directed in search of the

postulants. They entered last of all, in bridal costume, while young children strewn their path with flowers.

How beautiful Eveline looked, in trailing folds of creamy satin and delicate lace ! Ah, she blessed God in her heart that for this occasion had the bridal garments been reserved which had been prepared more than a year ago for her marriage with James Lowell. And Bessie was also the admiration of her mother and friends, who whispered to one another, "Glory be to goodness ! doesn't she look neat ! You wouldn't think 'tis she's there at all."

But the two postulants kept their eyes bent downwards, and their thoughts fixed on God.

Mrs. Allington, as she raised her head and looked at her daughter, felt a great pang of sorrow. She pictured to her mind what might have been had Lowell lived, and now Eva was lost to her for ever. She buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly. When she again looked up

Eveline and Bessie were clothed in the religious habit, and the Mass had begun. At the Gospel they went up to the altar, and were clothed with the veil, the girdle, scapular, and other portions of a nun's dress, and were told by the officiating priest to wear them with modesty and humility as the handmaids of Christ.

Eveline made the responses to the questions she and Bessie were asked with such sweetness and fervour as gave peace to the heart of her mother. A sermon was preached, praising the excellence of virginity and the life of a nun, and pointing out the heavenly and eternal reward that awaited them on the termination of this short life. Their lives would be in some manner identical with those of the angels, for if they adored Jesus Christ in His visible presence in heaven, the nuns of the order which was embraced by the young postulants on that day, passed their lives in adoring their Lord in His Sacramental Presence, and in making reparation

to Him for all the disrespect and coldness He meets with from men.

The Mass came at length to an end, and after a short interval allowed for thanksgiving, the *Te Mariam laudamus* was sung, and the nuns and children quitted the chapel.

Mrs. Allington and her husband were invited to breakfast, and among the guests were the very girls who a year previously had assembled at Fernwood House on the eve of Eva's wedding day, to act as her bridesmaids.

Mrs. Martin, in widow's weeds, was hugging and kissing Bessie until she almost suffocated her, and Mrs. Hurley (Mary), gorgeous in silken raiment, timidly approached Eveline, and wished her joy.

"I couldn't well make out your new name, miss," she said.

"Sister Mary Seraphine," answered Eva, cordially returning Mary's greeting. "I am, it seems, to rival the seraphim in my

piety and adoration, until the day dawns on which I shall join them above."

"I hope that day will be long distant," said Mary. Then, observing Mr. and Mrs. Allington impatient to speak to their daughter, she withdrew.

After breakfast, which was prolonged until eleven o'clock, the guests departed, and left Sister Mary Seraphine and Sister Clare at liberty to go to the chapel and throw themselves at the feet of their Divine Lord, and thank Him for the graces of that day.

The day came to an end, and long after Eva and Bessie were asleep, fond hearts were watching and aching at Fernwood, both in the "big house" and on Martin's farm. Was it that these young nuns loved their parents less than their parents loved them? No; but that they had so entirely sacrificed their hearts to God, that they could find no pleasure, no sweetness, anywhere else save in His arms.

The year glided by. Christmas came

and passed, and a new year set in cold and stormy. Heavy snow fell and covered the earth with a dazzling mantle. The poor suffered greatly for want of fuel, and busy fingers were constantly at work, both among nuns and pupils, shaping and sewing garments to clothe the shivering limbs of the aged and the destitute. Herein Bessie's aptitude for needlework made her of especial use, and for the time being she was withdrawn from all other occupations, and might be seen all day long seated at her work table, on which stood a small sewing machine.

One day Sister Monica, in a moment of leisure, came and sat beside her. "I think, Sister Clare," she said, "that you and this machine have done more work than the whole convent put together."

"Thanks to the machine, then," answered Bessie, laughing. "Yesterday, when that poor old man Flanagan came up for the shirt and vest, I saw Miss Ev—, I mean Sister Mary Seraphine, crying with

pity. I am afraid now she caught cold, for she was in a thorough draught all the time she was talking to him."

"I heard her coughing to-day," said Sister Monica.

"Did you?" said Bessie, starting. "Her lungs are so weak; Mother Basil ought to be told of it in time."

At this moment Sister Monica was called away, and Bessie, left to herself, stitched on in silence.

Before tea time Sister Mary Seraphine came in for an instant, to look for some article of clothing which a poor woman had called for. She looked a little flushed, Bessie thought, but otherwise not unwell.

"I hope you did not catch cold, Sister Mary Seraphine?" she said, anxiously.

"Oh, nothing in the world to speak of," she replied, with a bright smile. "If I can so easily catch cold, what may be said of those poor creatures who can't get a bit of turf to warm them? Have you the dress finished? Old Mrs. Murphy is here for it.

Her daughter is laid up in bed, and the children, poor things, are badly off. One of these nice warm shawls, knitted in the school, will be a great comfort to the old lady."

Bessie was seeking for the dress, and now gave it to Eva. "Let me speak to Mother St. Basil about you," she said.

"Oh no, please don't," said Eva; "it is really nothing, and it is a shame to be nursing our bodies while others suffer such distress. I shall be all right to-morrow." And she quitted the room.

Bessie shook her head doubtfully, but resolved to keep an eye upon Sister Mary Seraphine, and if she saw the least cause for so doing, to mention her fears to the infirmarian.

That night, however, one of the lay sisters was taken ill, and to Bessie was given the charge of attending her the following day, so that for two days she saw no more of Eva, and indeed her anxiety for

the sick nun almost banished the recollection of her from her mind.

On the evening of the second day, as Sister Clare was going downstairs to tea, she met Sister Mary Seraphine and Mother Basil coming up. The former seemed scarcely able to put one foot before the other, and breathed hard and rapidly, while Mother Basil looked at her most anxiously. Bessie drew aside to let them pass, and at the same moment a dreadful fear possessed her heart. She could hardly eat a mouthful, and going down to the kitchen, asked a lay sister whom she met there if Sister Mary Seraphine was ill.

"Yes, I believe so," replied the nun. "Sister Lucy told me she fainted a while ago in the school, and it frightened the young ladies very much."

"She was not pale, but flushed, when I saw her," rejoined Bessie. "Twice before, she has had illnesses that nearly finished her, and now she seems to me worse than either of these other times. I must go to

the chapel now." And Sister Clare hurried away, tears falling from her eyes at every step.

Eveline was indeed very ill. The nuns gathered together a little later before the Lady altar, reciting the Rosary for her recovery; but disease made so rapid a progress, that a day later the doctor reported that there was no hope, inflammation having set in.

Eva never lost her sweetness and serenity. Bessie had been selected to nurse her, as Mother Basil knew how fondly the young lay sister loved her, and she would not deprive her of the sad comfort of attending Eva on her death-bed.

Mr. and Mrs. Allington were also summoned, and they strove to conceal their grief so as not to embitter their darling's few remaining hours. When they entered the room in which she lay, they found her propped up in bed by pillows. A table stood near, covered with a clean cloth, and two wax candles burned thereon.

"Father Daly is coming to give her the last sacraments," whispered the Reverend Mother, who ushered them in.

The parents bent over the sick girl and kissed her, but they dared not trust their voices to speak. Eveline smiled, and stretching out her hands, caught hold of both her parents.

"You have come to forgive and to bless me," she managed to say with some difficulty.

"We have nothing to forgive, my own Eva," said Mrs. Allington, struggling with her tears. "Let it comfort you now to know that you have never done anything that could have given us a moment's displeasure."

Her father's face grew ashy white, and he turned from the bed. Here the tinkle of a bell gave notice of the approach of the Blessed Sacrament. Eva heard the sound, and made an effort to kneel.

"Remain as you are, dear child," said the superioress.

scarcely stirred or spoken, but now she turned to her mother. "You will give Alan and Hubert my love, mamma, and tell them I shall pray for them so hard in heaven. And you must take comfort also, mamma, and you, my dearest father. You will think of me often, I hope, because if you remember me you will remember God also, for I am going to Him. I have offended Him much, but I repent of it with my whole heart, and He knows I do, so that I now feel nothing but trust and love. Pray for my soul. Our dear Lady will take me out of purgatory, you know, on Saturday,"—and she pointed to her scapular,—“but even five minutes in purgatory is a dreadful thing. Have you any message for heaven, mamma?”

“That God may give me as blessed a death as yours, darling,” said Mrs. Allington, no longer able to restrain her tears, and speaking in a hushed voice, as though heaven lay open before her.

“And you, papa?”

Mr. Allington tried to speak, but his voice failed him. After a moment he said, with a great effort, "Ask that I may follow you soon, for my heart is broken."

Eva's eyes looked troubled. "God's will, my dearest father," she said, "God's will be done. He will comfort you, and I shall often be with you."

Her father stooped, and impressed a long fervent kiss on her forehead, her eyes, her lips.

"Henry," whispered his wife, "do not disturb her peace."

He knelt by the bed without a word, still holding his child's hand. Then the superioress approached, and whispered something to Eva.

"Yes, dear mother, I shall not forget," she replied, smiling. "Where is Sister Clare?"

Bessie drew near, and seizing Eva's hand, kissed it fondly. "You will pray for me," said Eva, faintly, "and I shall pray for you."

"I shall remember you to the end of my life, in every prayer I ever say," returned Bessie, impulsively.

"Think of God, love God," murmured Eva ; "He is so near, I hear Him calling."

Mother Mary Agnes just then entered the room to announce Father Daly's approach, and Mother Basil came in with the doctor a moment later. These two last exchanged a glance the instant they looked at Eva.

"Hasten the final absolution and indulgence, father," whispered Mother Basil to the priest, whom she went into the passage to meet ; "she is just going."

Father Daly hurried to the bedside, and placed a crucifix in Eva's hands. She pressed it to her lips, but the next instant it fell from her feeble grasp. She seemed frightened and half suffocated, and before the sound of the priest's words had ceased to echo in the room, Eva Allington's spirit had fled into a Higher and Holier Presence.

Amid the sobs of her mother and Sister

Clare, Father Daly repeated the prayers for the departed soul, and Mother Basil gently and reverently closed the sightless eyes.

The priest had some difficulty in inducing Mr. Allington to relinquish his grasp of the stiffening hands he held so firmly, and to leave the apartment until the last sad offices should have been performed; but Mrs. Allington drew her husband's arm within her own, and led him away.

They were permitted to see their child's remains again for a few minutes before they quitted the convent for the night. In the interval she had been laid upon a bed, dressed in her full religious habit, her crucifix in one hand, and the roll containing her vows in the other. She seemed in a calm, happy sleep, and her lips were parted in a smile.

Again and again the parents rained kisses on the pure white brow; again and again they breathed prayers for her

soul's repose ; until the superioress gently intimated that the hour was a very late one, and that the time had come for closing the convent gates. So they departed to their home, now rendered doubly desolate, to spend the night in tears and prayer.

Two days afterwards a Requiem Mass was celebrated in the convent chapel, and all that was mortal of Eva Allington was consigned to its last long rest in the peaceful private cemetery of the sisterhood.

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There is little more to add. Sister Clare lived to a good old age ; but until the last hour of her life she never forgot her promise of remembering Eva in every prayer she said.

Johnny Martin became a parish priest in course of time, and his mother went to live with him. He prepared her for death in the end, and she peacefully breathed her

last sigh in his arms. A niece of his, one of his sister Mary's children, then took her grandmother's place as his housekeeper.

Hubert returned from India in about ten years after he first went there, and settled down at home, but he had not returned alone. He brought back a charming little wife, who did her best to supply to Mr. and Mrs. Allington the place of the daughter they had lost.

Alan studied for the bar, and promised to make a very respectable figure as a lawyer. He was young, handsome, and a general favourite, and fortune seemed ready to smile on him in many ways; but a restlessness and longing for something higher took possession of his heart. He refused to marry, often saying, with a sigh, "Miss —— doesn't come up to my ideal; she is not like Eva." And then he abandoned his profession, and wandered over the world. In the end he came home, and entered the Jesuit noviciate, where he studied for the priesthood. Just after his

ordination he was summoned home to Fernwood to attend his father's deathbed; and in dying the old man averred that Eva, lovelier and younger than ever, stood by his side and smiled upon him, and stretching out his arms as if to embrace her, his spirit took flight from this world.

Mrs. Allington then took up her residence as a boarder in the convent, and daily spent an hour at Eva's grave. She was idolized by the children in the schools, and with reason, as she was constantly devising means of giving them pleasure.

Hubert's children were brought up at the convent, as their aunt had been, and one of them, still further following her example, has become a nun there, and is known by the same name.

So the world goes on,—a constantly shifting, changing scene. We grow middle aged, and old, and then we die, and others follow in our traces. And as the waves of the great sea of eternity wash away the footmarks of one generation, the succeed-

OR, AS THE CHILD, SO THE WOMAN. 107

ing one steps along the shore much in the same way, and the waves again advance and obliterate all impressions.

Happy shall we be if our feet follow the traces marked out for us by our Divine Master. In so doing we may thankfully look forward to laying down the weary burden of life some day at His feet, and of being crowned in peaceful, everlasting rest.





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